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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the responses of adolescents to literature "involving values based on the concept of human dignity," this study examined two groups of adolescents (60 students each) in grades 8-12. The two groups represented extremes of social sensitivity: highly sensitive and least sensitive to the feelings of others. Teachers read aloud 10 short stories to which the students responded by writing an undirected response and by completing a questionnaire, a check list, and a special scale. Analysis of the students' responses revealed that adolescents tended to notice only the most obvious points of a story and to express superficial concepts; they did not welcome new values or concepts. Although the highly sensitive adolescents wrote more full responses, most students had difficulty in expressing significant opinions about literature. Other data suggested that sex and socioeconomic status affected sensitivity but intelligence did not, and that the least sensitive adolescents were more concerned with money, clothes, and themselves, and tended to resist more strongly the controls of society. (A concluding section draws on the findings to make practical suggestions for the teaching of literature.) (LK)

AA 000 505

Literature and Social Sensitivity

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Literature and Social Sensitivity

Preface

Literature, unlike propaganda, is not intended to secure practical results. Between *Macbeth* and *Mein Kampf* a difference exists, and that difference is immense. The precarious harmony of a work of literature is a balanced structure of innumerable tensions, qualities, and relationships. To view literature as a straightforward formula for action is to mistake its nature and to miss its most rewarding values.

However, because it enlarges our awareness of values and *refines our discrimination among values,* literature is a force of tremendous potential for education. Literature can open the awareness of a reader to wider and deeper perceptions and organizations of experience. Literature can lift that reader above the petty or narrow concerns that usually consume his time. No one who has fully appreciated a novel by Conrad or a poem by Li Po is left unchanged. To whatever extent the good life is dependent upon discrimination among the values in experience, literature can contribute to the liberal education our civilization seeks for as many human beings as possible.

Teachers of literature, unlike literary scholars, are greatly concerned with the reader's response to literature. In the case of children and adolescents, this response is often crude and immature. Furthermore, teachers are not concerned only with the best, the most qualified readers. In our culture, the aim of literary instruction is based on the premise that as many pupils as possible should receive the values of literature. That this aim will be accomplished in varying degrees according to the capacities of the learner is acknowledged.

Because instruction in literature to large numbers of pupils is an enterprise of great complexity, any inquiry into it must proceed cautiously. The study reported in this brochure focuses on one carefully selected aspect, the response of adolescents to literature involving values based on the concept of human dignity. The responses are expressed by adolescents of high and low social sensitivity. In such a study, the first task was to find adolescents who were highly sensitive to the feelings of other people and an equal number of adolescents whose sensitivity to the feelings of others was demonstrably low. The next step was to study these two unlike groups as thoroughly as possible for clues that might illuminate their differences in respect to sympathetic behavior. Could there be found any cluster of attitudes, needs, or behavior which would accompany high or low social sensitivity and which might point a direction wherein

further enlightenment might lie? Would family background, church attendance, position in family, or intelligence show any relationship to high or low social sensitivity? How would the adolescents in these two extreme groups respond to values in literature concerned with human dignity and the behavior men call sympathy or social sensitivity? These and similar questions are the problems around which this study was designed.

Such research, it should be noted, reports the relationships between adolescents' social sensitivity and their reactions to situations in literature. Further research will be needed to determine empirically whether or not social sensitivity can be increased by the study of literature. The practical suggestions for schools, presented at the close of this brochure, offer ideas for such further research.

The writer wishes to thank the Committee on Intercultural Relations of the National Council of Teachers of English. He also wishes to thank the Commission on Educational Organizations of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. These two organizations granted funds for use in the quantitative aspects of this research.

Readers of the manuscript, who made numerous useful suggestions, were Dr. Donald D. Durrell of Boston, Dr. J. Conrad Seegers of Philadelphia, and Miss Margaret B. Parke of New York.

The Social Importance of Sympathy

Civilization and sympathy are inseparable; all lasting and just social cooperation requires this quality of human understanding which we term sympathy. As space and time shrink and mankind's interdependence grows more pronounced, our need to understand other people as human beings will only be the greater.

The schools, to the degree that they are responsive to the problems and requirements of society, are searching for ways to increase social sensitivity. Education is discovering that among the means for changing human behavior, those which appeal to the reason and intellect alone are less effective than those which also involve the emotions and the imagination. Pageantry, drama, literature, and art, all supported by information and knowledge, offer the best means for educating a total human personality sufficiently to change his behavior.

Many claims are made for the development of sympathy or insight into human relations through the use of literature. These claims, though unsubstantiated by research, hold our attention in view of the fact that stories and plays and poetry are used almost universally for that purpose in parochial and public education. Consequently, although it is only one

factor among many which may contribute to education for human relations, literature is nevertheless considered very important. However, little is known about the most effective ways to use literature in relation to such purposes, and the claims for the development of insight into human relations through the proper use of literature remain vague.

Definition of Sympathy

In this study, sympathy is defined as a form of social behavior in which one person achieves an intellectual and emotional understanding of another person's state of mind.[1] This process always includes three characteristics:

An employment of both intellectual and emotional capacities.
A feeling with the other being, a feeling that is favorable rather than antagonistic in its orientation.
An emotional response that is mature in its dimensions.

Merely perceiving the other person's state of mind is not enough to constitute sympathy. A favorable feeling for the other person is all important. A few examples will help to make this clear. The theater audience at *The Little Foxes* may understand very fully the selfish and unscrupulous Regina and her two brothers, but such understanding is not sympathy. Confidence men and swindlers are highly skilled at understanding other people; yet we would not say, in Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady,* that Madame Merle's cunning understanding and manipulation of Isabel Archer is an example of sympathetic insight. Napoleon was a master at comprehending other people. Hitler's estimates of human frailty were shrewd and penetrating. Yet swindlers and dictators alike can be ruled out of consideration on the principle that mere understanding does not constitute sympathy. Obviously, sympathy is more than intellectual understanding of another being; it involves *feeling,* feeling with another human being the emotional tone of his experience, and it involves an attitude that favors the interests of the other person. This point eliminates the kind of awareness which enables a shrewd individual to use people as means toward his own ends.

Maturity of emotional response is one of the most important factors involved in attaining social sensitivity. The relation of emotional maturity to sympathy is easily apparent from any observation of human beings who are notably unsympathetic in their relations with other people. Study any person who is callous or indifferent to human suffering. His insensitivity will almost always be related to a self-centered, infantile level of maturity. The capacity to consider the interests of other individuals as

well as one's self, although it is only one aspect of emotional maturity, is highly important. An excellent example from *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* is the chapter in which the boy Lennie struggles between his unselfish concern over Mrs. Neely's illness and his immature desire to dramatize himself as a hero riding to the doctor to save her life. Lennie recognizes the drive of his ego to find for himself a central position in the serious adult drama that is occurring; at the same time he is troubled by an awareness that his feeling for the sick woman is little more than an embryonic imitation of the genuine emotions his grownup friends feel. The incident captures the very pulse of growth in a boy, showing him as he balances and wavers between childish immaturity and the release of further impulses toward adult emotional development.

Quite frequently, too, biographical accounts introduce another factor of sympathetic behavior, the importance of the context or total situation. At a time when Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings had just purchased an orange grove in Florida, she was deep in work and confused by her new way of life.[3] Preoccupied with her own difficulties, she paid small attention to the problems of an impoverished young married couple and their baby, squatters in an old shack on a distant part of her farm. After they had moved away, Mrs. Rawlings found they had left a mark on her. The young mother, soft-spoken, poor, and timid, "came to me in my dreams and tormented me—The only way I could shake free of her was to write of her, and she is Florry in *Jacob's Ladder*. She still clung to me and she was Allie in *Golden Apples*. Now I know she will haunt me as long as I live, and all the writing in the world will not put away the memory of her face and the sound of her voice."

Thus the extent to which anyone is able to sympathize with others appears to depend upon a number of factors which free an individual from self-concern. Some of those factors, working together in complex fashion, are emotional maturity, health, and freedom from pressing self-concerns. On the other hand, self-concern and fatigue represent factors which operate to reduce sympathy. Even with persons who customarily show great social sensitivity, these latter factors may block the feeling and expression of sympathy. It is as if a threshold of some kind were raised and lowered for the flow of whatever potentialities of sympathy exist within a personality. We know from studies by Jack, Lewin, and Lippitt[8] that personality traits like dominance and emotional stability—traits that seem even more inextricably interrelated with personality than sympathy—are capable of great change. They seem to be dependent upon the social environment and can be deeply affected by changes in that environment. From an educational point of view, this may mean that it

is more important to set the stage for social sensitivity (by creating a serene classroom atmosphere, by noting and providing buffers for the tensions between different personalities in a group, by attending to physical and mental health) than it is to teach patterns of sympathetic behavior to insecure pupils. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' subsequent feelings of guilt demonstrate that something other than lack of insight and sensitivity prevented her from sympathizing with the young squatters on her Florida farm. In this case, her potentialities for sympathy were impeded by strong personal worry and a sense of personal insecurity.

Sentimentality

In situations of human sorrow, fear, or joy we sometimes find bystanders responding with still a different kind of behavior that must be separated from true sympathy. Sentimentality is a substitute for real thought, real emotion, real sympathy. It is a mechanism of immature self-satisfaction, employing the outward appearances of sympathy. Frequently, sentimentality betrays its artificial quality by a lack of proportion between the emotion displayed and the cause of the emotion. Thus, Uncle Toby in *Tristram Shandy* gently carries the fly he has caught to the window and sets it loose, and many school children in the nineteenth century were encouraged to shed tears over poems like this one:

> Poor little butterfly dead on the walk!
> Pick him up, Rose, with a violet stalk.
> In Mama's flower pot dig him a grave,
> Let the geranium over him wave.
>
> Rest, little butterfly, in your soft bed,
> A rose at your feet and a stone at your head.

Granted that not enough is known about the most effective ways to strengthen desirable emotions in children, training in sympathy, surely, will do well to avoid the pitfall of sentimentality. By centering upon suitable human subjects rather than trapped flies and dead butterflies, teachers can emphasize the values of human dignity. At the same time, remembering how effectively the mistreatment of Smokey the cow-horse summons up children's emotions in Will James' story, teachers will find it necessary to fit guidance in sympathy to the psychology of children and to children's interest in animals and imaginary tales. In our culture, at any rate, such interests are very prominent in the child's world. As children grow older, parents and teachers may take more to heart Van

Wyck Brook's dislike of tender-minded persons. "I cannot get on with tender-minded people. I like tender hearts, but I like tough minds, those whom we used to call hard-headed. The life of the heart thrives when people are hard-headed, while the tender-minded play into the hands of the tough in heart. When people's heads are soft, their hearts grow hard."[4]

A Design for an Investigation of Literature and Sympathy

With these definitions in mind, this study focuses upon two exceptional groups of adolescents, those highly sensitive to the feelings of others and those least sensitive to the feelings of other people. These two groups, of 60 each, were selected from a larger sample of 376 adolescents. Locating these two extremes—the highly sensitive and the least sensitive—studying the ways in which they differ from each other (or do not differ), and analyzing their responses to literature intended to evoke sympathy represent the three primary functions of this research. It is a study designed as a broad frontal attack on the problem of locating sympathetic and inconsiderate behavior patterns in the hope that promising directions for further effort may be identified.

The Subjects in this Investigation

The initial problem was to find a generous cross section of adolescent boys and girls from Grades 8 through 12 who would represent as wide a variety of personality as possible. Such a choice of adolescents would include the following groupings: boys and girls; rural and urban; wealthy, middle-class, and poor; public school, private school, and reform school; Caucasian, Negro, and Oriental; as many of the representative religious faiths of America as possible; and a majority fairly typical of the average American boy or girl. To meet these conditions, arrangements were concluded in the fall of 1947 with seven public schools in the Midwest and with one private school and one reform school, both for boys.

The Method of Investigation

Some limitation of such a broad problem of sympathy was, of course, necessary in order to avoid vagueness and a dispersal of effort. Because the teaching of sympathy in human relations is an important problem in education, the focus of this research was directed to adolescents in the schools. Also, because literature is believed to be one of the most potent of educational forces in affecting the behavior of adolescents, literature intended to evoke sympathy was given a central position in the design of the investigation.

Two measures constituted the basis on which the adolescents' social

sensitivity (sympathy) was rated. The first of these, a sociometric instrument, described various adolescents whose behavior was low or high in sensitivity and provided a blank space beside each description. All the pupils filled in the names of classmates who exemplified the behavior described in the instrument. As a second measure their teachers rated the adolescents on a scale of social sensitivity ranging from *exceptionally sympathetic* and *considerate* to *ruthless, cruel, brutal.* This second rating took place at the close of a school year during which the teachers, aware of the purpose of this research, had observed the social behavior of their pupils with a sharper attention than usual to manifestations of sensitivity. Many of these teachers, also, were the advisors, home room directors, or counselors of the subjects. A third measure, the Hawthorne Group Test of Cruelty-Compassion (a standardized test), was used as a check on the first two.

The judgments of pupils and teachers were given equal weight. The final result was a distribution so close to the normal curve that two-thirds of the cases fell within one standard deviation from the mean. The sixty cases of highly sensitive students more than one standard deviation *above* the mean were then selected by this combined instrument. For contrast with the highly sensitive adolescents, another sixty who were equally as far toward the bottom of the scale were designated as low-sensitive cases.

Throughout the remainder of this investigation these two groups, representing the extremes of social sensitivity among the subjects, were studied separately from the large middle group of adolescents. *All* subjects were further studied by a long series of measures falling mainly into two categories:

1. Measures designed to learn as much as possible about the subjects' responses to ten selections of literature in which the authors' intention is clearly to evoke sympathy.
2. Measures designed to learn as much as possible about the subjects themselves—their intelligence, emotional needs, socio-economic status, religious faiths, church attendance, acceptance or rejection by other adolescents, home conditions, reading ability, health, mental stability, values and ideals, race, sex, etc.

Many precautions were taken to prevent unwarranted errors. Specialists and experts were consulted personally on such matters as measurement, sociometrics, and intergroup relations. Preliminary tryouts of all the measures were carried out with adolescents in the Minneapolis Public Schools, and numerous revisions were made on the basis of those trials.

Teachers were visited and briefed in advance, and students were repeatedly assured that their responses would in no way affect their status in school. Particular care was taken to treat all the adolescent subjects with the same deference and respect that any cultured adult shows toward another adult.

Dealing as it did with complex patterns of human mental organization, this investigation relied upon a combination of quantitative procedures and qualitative methods. Case studies and personal documents were used, not only for the insights they might afford, but also for developing a framework within which to interpret the quantitative data and the statistical relations that developed. The study acknowledges the limitations of all assessment of human personality. The scores are not absolute scores nor are they comparable in the manner of scores in a physical scientist's ideal of true measurement. No claim is made beyond this: the study is an attempt to bring order into one important aspect of the study of human relations. It is an initial attack upon the problem of sympathy in order to reduce, in that area, the abrupt and the obscure.

After a great deal of information from questionnaires and tests had been collected for every adolescent, the teachers read aloud to the students a series of short stories. These stories had been carefully chosen for the poignancy of their appeal to a reader's feelings of sympathy; the nearness of the story characters to the subjects' age; the combination of literary skill and emotional power; and the balance of boy and girl characters. Fifteen such stories were tried out in advance with students in schools that did not participate in the experiment. On the basis of these preliminary try-outs, the nine stories which follow were chosen:

1. A MOTHER IN MANNVILLE — Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
2. YOURS LOVINGLY — Eugenie Courtright
3. A START IN LIFE — Ruth Suckow
4. THE KISKIS — May Vontver
5. THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM — Rachel Field
6. THE HORSE — Marion McNeely
7. THE NEW KID — Murray Heyert
8. PRELUDE — Albert Halper
9. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO ME — Michael Fessier

To these was added a tenth so that the investigator might determine the response of adolescents to a character not of their age or psychological needs:

10. MISS BRILL — Katherine Mansfield

For each of these stories the students recorded four kinds of responses:

1. A discussion written immediately after the conclusion of the story, capturing the student's immediate reactions. This was a free response, undirected as to content.

2. A special scale consisting of selected statements, each with a multiple-point arrangement for response. *Example:* Mr. Gooby is right when he says, in "Yours Lovingly," "Give an Indian something once, and you've got him on your back the rest of your life."

---------- I definitely agree
---------- I agree a little
---------- I am uncertain
---------- I disagree somewhat
---------- I definitely disagree

3. A questionnaire covering crucial aspects of the story and the reader's response. *Example:* If you had been the author of this story, how would you have had it end?

4. A check list ranging from great admiration to extreme dislike for the main character.

In addition to these four responses, the students were given, at the conclusion of the experiment, a list of all the characters in all ten stories. From this list of characters, the students listed the two they would most like to help if they could choose only two. This measure had for its purpose the determination of what kinds of characters and situations appealed most to the sympathies of adolescents.

In connection with student response, one interesting phenomenon appeared during the course of the study. Having been forewarned that their cooperation meant a very complete probing of their personalities, values, and attitudes, the students began the long series of measures with no illusions about the length of the investigation. However, they were not told that sympathy was the central feature of the study or that the ten stories were all concerned with studying their sympathetic responses. The only facetious or unfavorable responses occurred toward the conclusion of the project among reactions to some of the last stories read aloud by the teachers. By that time, a number of the students were bored by "sad stories about 'drips' in trouble." By that time, also, the first batteries of tests had been scored, and it was possible to distinguish between the most sensitive and least sensitive adolescents. It is note-

worthy that the facetious remarks about the literature came *entirely* from the least sensitive in the group. The highly sensitive students were seriously concerned to the very end; their capacities for suffering with mistreated fictional characters remained unabated. In fact, from one story to the next their sympathy seemed to increase.

Adolescents' Reactions to Literature

As a measure of sympathy, a short story is sometimes less effective than a movie or a play in which the situation intended to evoke sympathy is not so dependent upon imagination and verbal ability. In turn, a movie is one step removed from (and therefore less effective than) real-life situations in which the subject is involved and in which his actions and verbal responses would be highly valid indications of his sympathy. However, real-life situations do not lend themselves to research because of the almost insuperable difficulties of setting them up and of controlling them. Furthermore, this investigation is a study of the uses which can be made of *literature*. Interesting as movies might be or valuable as the elusive real-life situations might be, they are beyond the limitations of this problem.

In order to equalize the students' verbal abilities as much as possible, the ten short stories chosen were read aloud by the teacher. All the stories chosen are concerned with human beings who are in situations which evoke sympathy from those who have the capacity to feel with other people. For example, here are brief summaries of six of the stories used:

In "A Mother in Mannville,"[5] a boy from an orphan asylum works for a woman who becomes in his mind the realization of the mother he yearns to have. He tells the woman about his mother who gives him suits and skates and to whom he gives gifts. Not until she leaves the area does the woman realize that Jerry's "mother" is only an imaginative fulfillment of his deepest needs.

"Yours Lovingly"[6] is an account of a homely tubercular Indian boy whose father is a wandering logger. Homeless, friendless, and ill, Julius dies in a state sanitarium, befriended by only one person, a stenographer at the Indian reservation from which Julius was sent to the sanitarium. The heartless institutional behavior of the reservation administrator seems all the more insensitive because of Julius' humble gratitude for the meager help he receives.

"A Start in Life"[7] portrays the homesickness of a child who goes to work as a hired girl before she is old enough to cope with the indifference of a cold world.

"The Horse"[8] is the nickname given by city high school students to an earnest awkward girl from a rural district. The "Horse's" ambitions to finish school vanish when a practical joke exposes her to the laughter of a large audience of the students.

"The New Kid"[9] is the scapegoat for another boy named Marty. Rejected by his neighborhood gang, Marty carries out frantic activities to gain a place in the group. Being despised, humiliated and rejected is so devastating an experience that

Marty seeks to bolster his self-respect by finding someone worse off than he. Persecuting a kid who is new to the neighborhood offers Marty the opportunity of assuaging his own ego-hurt and of transferring his sense of shame to someone else.

"That's What Happend to Me"[10] tells the story of a high school boy whose failure to achieve status with his peer group impels him to find compensation in his daydreams. In his inner thoughts he accomplishes surpassing feats on the athletic field and is a hero to all those who have snubbed him.

After the subjects had written their responses to the ten short stories, each response was scored by placing it beside a list of the points which five competent judges had agreed a sympathetic reader with insight would notice. For every instance of agreement between the student's response and the judges' list, the student received one point. When the adolescents' total scores on all ten stories were added together, they ranged from 0 to 33. One boy had completely failed to express any of the points in the ten stories which the judges listed as those a reader with sympathetic insight would notice. At the other end of the scale, a girl had listed responses that tallied with 33 of the judges' seventy points for the ten stories.

To determine whether or not there was a significant difference between the two groups of adolescents in their responses to the ten stories, a statistical study was made of the frequency with which the subjects expressed the same concepts that the judges listed. The difference in favor of the most sensitive adolescents proves to be statistically significant at the one per cent level of confidence. That is, the difference is almost certainly due to the composition of the two groups rather than to some other chance factor.

Although such quantitative analysis is valuable, these adolescents' responses offer many other possibilities for study. In personal documents of this kind we possess materials which indicate what goes on in adolescents' minds. For example, let us examine the mental states of three particular subjects in this study as reflected by their comments on the short story "Prelude." In "Prelude"[11] a gang of idle boys vent their irritations on a Jewish newsstand dealer and his children. An apathetic and timid crowd watches the gang torment the dealer's son and damage the stand. The dealer's daughter predicts that persecution of minorities is only a prelude to fascism.

Bonita D., low on sympathy

The story was good to show how certain classes and races of people are treated but it drags out too long. It was rather dull. The story was true to life. The author was trying to make us see the violence and prejudice held against certain religions though these people are as good citizens as anyone else. The gang is typical of a lot of ignorant people—shiftless, jobless and prejudiced.

This story started me to thinking about my attitude toward other religions.

I've never considered myself prejudiced and I've never knowingly discriminated against other people. Yet, I'm like the people (in the story) who wouldn't help. I just stand by and watch and don't take an active stand against it . . . The trouble in this story can't be traced to anyone. I've talked about race prejudice, and yet I don't know when or how it starts. It's just a general feeling we have about other races and religions. There is no foundation for it, but people just aren't interested enough to stop it.

Grace L., high on sympathy

This is another of the stories which show the beginnings or the causes for prejudice. It's all so uncalled-for; there wouldn't have to be any prejudice. But people are unhappy and must make others not as strong as they, unhappy too. When you read a story like this you can be affected two ways, depending on the mood you're in. You'll either feel like fighting all this cruelty, hate, selfishness in the world, or you'll want to give up, and say, "Is it really worth fighting for after all?" The quality of patience which was so evident in Mr. Silverstein was also present in his son. After being beaten and hurt as he was, Harry didn't cry about it. Instead he helped clean up the stand. Sylvia showed the usual feminine weakness and cried. Women cry at first, but just give them time. They have more strength and fortitude in the long run. This story really upset me. I could have cried and slapped those bullies and all the onlookers who never raised a hand to help. The picture of those poor people seemed so real to me, a symbol of all the pain, persecution, prejudice in the world now. And what do people do? Stand and watch!

Nothing that has happened to me or my friends can be compared with that. But the books or movies which you see and read show that prejudice, strife and discord begin that way. It doesn't seem possible that things of that sort could start here, but facts are facts. They must be true. The thing that makes me angry is the *standing* around and watching, not helping, watching.

Gooley and his men were unhappy. They had no jobs. They wanted to make someone else suffer for their frustration. Jews couldn't fight back; they were the underdogs. Do anything to make another suffer with you!

Bob W., high on sympathy

I liked the story but it made me pretty mad to think that in a democracy like the U. S. such a thing could happen and does happen. I personally don't see any difference between a Jew, Negro, Catholic, or Protestant. I just can't see how the color of your skin, your religion, or your beliefs can make one person or a group of people any better than another. I've done a lot of traveling and have met people of almost all races, religions, and nationality. Some of them are good, some of them are bad just like us. We're not all good; we're not all bad. Nothing makes me so mad as to hear someone called a dirty foreigner. No other nation on earth is made up of more different types of people than the U. S. Blend them all together and you have an American but without all the different types you wouldn't have a real American.

These three subjective records provide a distillation of complex and subtle differences in personality patterns. Bonita D., from the low sensitive group, recognizes the intention of the author and the basic elements

of the plot. She expresses appropriate civilized judgments on the ethical problem of the story. Nevertheless, she finds the story dull, admits that she would not actively take sides in as actual incident of this nature, and lacks insight concerning the roots of bigotry. At no point does she express any strong feeling, any revulsion against injustice or cruelty, or any concern for the human dignity of the victims. There is no evidence that she has identified herself with any of the characters, even though the courageous and spirited Sylvia in this story is Bonita's own age and sex.

A member of the group selected for its high sensitivity, Grace shows strong feeling, particularly in her attitude toward the very matter on which Bonita expresses apathy. Although words and behavior can differ, one feels that in an actual situation such as this story presents, Grace would be far less likely than Bonita to remain cool, aloof, and collected. Grace's tendency to identify is much greater than Bonita's, she seems more aware of suffering, and she realizes more fully the causes of cruelty and intolerance.

Bob W., a member of the high sensitive group, also expresses an emotional reaction. He is obviously much more deeply involved in the story than Bonita was; he expresses himself more vehemently; and he has apparently had more varied experiences and contacts with people than either of the girls.

Such an examination of the subjects' responses to the short stories does furnish valuable evidence of a kind different from that of the quantitative analyses. This evidence deals more fully with the dynamics of attitudes and personalities: varying emphases of emotion and reason are involved; tendencies toward action or acquiescence play their role; the crucial factor of identification lends its important influence.

When all the responses to the stories were analyzed, a number of tendencies appeared quite frequently. Eight of these most notable features of the story responses are summarized here.

(1) *The Least Sensitive Want to Blame Someone.* One of the first features to emerge from a reading of these responses is the tendency on the part of those low in sensitivity to blame someone. This is particularly evident in the stories "The Horse," "A Start in Life," and "The New Kid," stories in which there are no appealing characters with whom it is easy to identify. Concerning "A Start in Life," the low sensitive subjects assert that the homesick hired girl is "stupid, a drip, clumsy, slow, and homely." She is too self-confident for her own good; she should have been more observant. The people Daisy works for have the big head; they are sneaky, mean, bad, and love their own kids too much. Daisy's mother

is another target. She is ignorant, weak and cowardly. The author and story as a story do not escape the animosity of this group.

In "The New Kid," condemnation and accusations devoid of insight characterize three-fourths or more of the responses from the low sensitive group. The New Kid should have guts enough to catch the ball, Gelberg is nothing but a big bully to be despised, Ray-Ray is mean, they are all a bunch of sissies, Marty is yellow, he thinks he is too smart, and he is stupid (a favorite word with this group). The story is "just plain lousy," and the Kid should have stayed out of the game when he couldn't play instead of making a fool of himself. In none of these comments does one find any understanding of the psychological bases for behavior. Here are two typical papers from the low sensitive group. Both are responses to "The New Kid."

Harlan M.

As far as I was concerned this story was the lousiest one I've heard in a long time. The plot was stupid, the characters real — but uninteresting. It seems way below the standard of a high school student's literary taste. There was no real purpose for this story—it simply showed a conflict between kids and not too interesting kids at that.

Fred J.

Boys naturally do not want to make room for a coward who can't play ball. I feel that in the same circumstances 90% of boys would follow the example set by the gang. Some of them would bully more but I feel that the others would not disapprove of the action. It is not our particular problem to find room for a "Marty" in our school; but if he already exists, I don't believe it concerns us either. If we would start to worry about the little incidents like these that play on our emotions, we would have so many worries we would have little time for anything else.

For "The Horse," the gawky country girl who is ridiculed by her city classmates, the low sensitive group have only accusations:

Ned H.

I figure that Martha should have stuck to the writing of instead of the reading of poetry.

She tried to outdo herself by dressing in what she thought was very presentable to the group. Had she worn the same type of clothes that she had worn to school the group would probably not have laughed.

I think we ought to have a change in stories. First they were physical cruelty as Sammie or Abie Silverstine or whatever it was, and now mental cruelty like today's story.

Andrew R.

I didn't think it was a very good story. But I think it is a true story. Martha must have been the black sheep of the bunch or she would have had some friends.

Donald C.

The story was rather an odd one. I've never heard of anyone quitting school because of the way they were treated by the other children.

Martha seemed a little under average for a girl her age. She should have realized that she had no close friends and she should have tried to cultivate some. Almost everyone can have friends if they want them.

I'm a little tired of all these stories.

Horace T.

She should have realized before she read the poem, that the students were doing this just to poke fun at her. If the students have never said nothin to her before, why should they all of a sodden start talking to her for no reason at all. In regard to that dress she wore the day she gave the poem, she shouldn't have wore it. If it looked as bad as everyone said there was no sense in wearing it. She could have wore what she always wore.

Bert P.

The author of this one is trying to make us feel sorry again, the same as all the other stories. It is all *so* sad.

These responses to "The Horse" have all been written by boys from the low sensitive group. Responses from boys in the sensitive group differ quite startlingly. Here, for instance, is a boy who measures high in social sensitivity, plays football on the first team in his high school, wants to be a pilot for a commercial airline, and shows all the typical likes and dislikes of a high school boy. Yet his response is definitely different from those of the boys in the low sensitive group.

Ted J., (high score on sympathy)

I felt very sorry for this girl because of the way she was treated. I thought it was very mean of the students to make fun of her the way they did. I think this story is very true of the way people sometimes treat others. I know there are people in our school that are treated almost the same way. I felt very sorry for her all through the story and I wish it could have had a happier ending.

Many sensitive girls began their response like that of Diane J. who wrote, "I felt very sorry for Martha. It was almost as though I was there, perhaps even Martha."

In contrast to the responses of the low sensitive adolescents, the members of the high sensitive group are disposed to understand rather than to accuse, condemn, or blame. Sensitive adolescents express more awareness of the pressures of life, recognizing, for instance, in "A Start in Life," the poverty of Daisy's mother and its influence in sending Daisy out to work at so early an age. They realize better the needs of human beings like "The New Kid" or "The Horse" and how those psychological needs affect behavior. More of them, too, express sympathy for the un-

lovely Daisy and the badly-behaved Marty. Writes Rilla A., "I felt *terrible* sorry for Daisy and I felt as though I didn't want to listen to the story any more because Daisy was so sad." Of "The New Kid," another says, "Everytime the author told of Marty's blow to the New Kid it made me feel almost as if I was getting hit . . . I wish the author had told something different." However, even though the sensitive group comprehends quite well the literal psychology of the characters in a story like "The New Kid," none of them mentions that the story is an illustration of scapegoating.

(2) *Almost All Adolescents Miss Important Implications.* A second feature of these responses that soon strikes any investigator is the overwhelming evidence that adolescents mention only the most obvious points of a story. Concepts which are implied in the stories or which require vigor or refinement of imagination remain largely unmentioned by either group. One gains the feeling that all these adolescents need an infinitely greater amount of experience, under teacher guidance, in discussing the *significance* of various literary texts. They need to point out implications, and they need to search out relationships to experience and to other literature. They need more practice in analyzing what lies beneath the situations and events and behavior in a story. Clearly such instruction cannot be carried out in one year by a single teacher. It will undoubtedly have to begin in the elementary school and be re-inforced all the way through high school.

Table 1 reproduces part of the tally that was made of the concepts the subjects did or did not apprehend in one of the stories, "Yours Lovingly." Few of the adolescents notice concepts that require analysis of behavior or response to implication. It is interesting to observe, in Table 1, that more of the least sensitive adolescents notice Mr. Gooby's selfishness than Miss Canby's kindliness and sympathy.

The tabulation for each of the other stories indicates the same trend *toward noticing only obvious points.* The closer a concept is to plain, literal exposition, the larger the number (in both groups) who mention the concept. The more a concept depends upon understanding or imaginative reading, the fewer the number who list it. In "The New Kid," for instance, most of the sensitive subjects note that Marty wants group acceptance very much and that rejection by the group accounts for his bad behavior. They do not note that the story has important implications concerning the psychology of intolerance and scapegoating. They do not mention that aggressive behavior is highly approved in the culture which molds the boys in this story. They do not mention that by humiliating the New Kid, Marty eases his own humiliation and bolsters his own self-

TABLE 1

Tabulation of Adolescents' Success with the concepts declared by Five Experts to be Those a Sympathetic Reader with Insight Would Apprehend in "Yours Lovingly"

Concept	*Number of Cases Who Expressed the Concept*	
	High Sensitive Group	Low Sensitive Group
1. Mr. Gooby is limited, selfish, insensitive, accustomed to thinking in stereotypes, and more likely to treat people as means to his own ends than as ends in themselves	46	33
2. Miss Canby has an understanding heart and a will to help others who are lonely or in distress	47	25
3. Julius Pokagen has the normal needs and interests that characterize all human beings of his age and sex	5	3
4. Satisfying his deepest needs constitutes exceptional (almost ecstatic) happiness for Julius	3	1
5. Institutions tend to become impersonal and inhuman . . . witness the situation in this story as an example	4	1
6. There is a tragic irony in the fact that Mr. Gooby and not Miss Canby should be the recipient of Julius' reverent affection	4	4
7. Mr. Gooby's influence on those around him is harmful and embittering	1	0
8. By rationalizing his neglect, Mr. Gooby preserves his own self-esteem	1	0

respect. In this story, the less sensitive group do very badly, not even reaching the crude level of understanding achieved by the more sensitive subjects.

(3) *Many Readers Express Superficial Concepts.* A great many puzzling responses fall into a special pattern. Curiously brittle, superficial, and stiff, these particular responses never come to grips with the actual stories. Rather they appear to be some kind of verbalistic moralizing touched off by various stimuli in the stories, substitutes for thinking rather than genuine responses. The suggestions these adolescents offer for solving problems in the stories are invariably unrealistic and fail to reckon with the facts the stories provide. One would like to know more about the psychology of these responses; such an understanding might yield clues about the interaction between literature and certain shallow personalities. As the following case shows, not all of these are among the less sensitive cases:

Opal M., average score on sympathy

> This story "The New Kid," is an interesting and enjoyable one in many ways. I have noticed many things about the people in the story. I felt sorry for the new kid, because he probably hasn't had much fun in life. His mother has him go on errands for her, which is perfectly all right, but she too should give her boy the chance to play with other boys so he could defend himself. Maybe if the boys gave him another chance, then he would be able to show that he could learn all the fundamentals of the game. The boys, such as Marty, didn't give the new kid much of a chance. As soon as he missed the ball, all of the boys started to pick on him which wasn't right at all. The New Kid does need another chance.

Only once, in the story "Prelude," did Opal give evidence of being sufficiently upset by a story to write in a direct personal style. Her most amazing offering is her response to "That's What Happened to Me," the story in which a high school boy with an inferiority complex day dreams that he high jumps *twelve feet* "with only a short run." Opal never becomes aware of the day dream element in the story:

> It was wonderful for him to win the high-jump game as many times as he did. That sure must have been thrilling to see. Even more thrilling to do.

One can only wonder about Opal's grasp of reality and murmur "Indeed!" to her last sentence-fragment.

(4) *Few Know What to Say About Literature.* A fourth conclusion the reader of these responses reaches is the conviction that adolescent attempts at literary criticism are frequently and obviously the undigested repetition of their elders' viewpoints. Again and again the subjects in this study seek to apply ready-made formulas concerning propriety of language, good style, or the "delights of good description" to stories whose form or artistry defy such stereotypes. Frequently this concern with ready-made formulas appears to be an adolescent's way of feeling secure. Surely adults will approve (the adolescent may reason) if I write, "The language in this story is not good. Al' the boys say *ain't.*"

These attempts to judge form apart from content and apart from a sensitive recognition of the author's intention are disturbing. They may be the result of curricula in which scholarly criticism has been introduced to immature minds or they may result from a sterile kind of literary criticism that never comes to grips with the actualities of a literary work. In any event, they are a sobering experience to anyone who is concerned with the teaching of literature in the public schools.

(5) *The Most Sensitive Have the Most to Say.* A fifth feature that emerges from a reading of these responses and questionnaires is the pronounced tendency of the high sensitive group to write more fully than

the other group. Since their average intelligence does not differ from that of the lower group, some other reasons must be operating to produce this difference in fullness of response. One cause may be the larger proportion of girls in the upper group and the larger number of boys in the lower group. Girls show more verbal facility than boys. Socially sensitive people may cooperate better, also, in situations such as this experiment. It is also reasonable to suggest that the sensitive people, having greater insight and having felt more involved in the stories by virtue of a greater ability to identify, have more to say. Over and over again, the members of the *less sensitive* group write, "I couldn't understand this story," "I can't figure out why the author didn't finish this story," "I don't see why —," and "I don't get the point of this story because it is chopped off in the middle."

(6) *Adolescents Do Not Welcome New Values or Concepts.* The greatest number of responses are those in which the subjects demonstrate a preference for stories which they call "exciting" or "funny." Quite frequently apparent, also, is a resistance to any literature which requires reflection or which contains ideas contrary to their expectations or attitudes. Many of these adolescents seem destined to achieve, as their highest intellectual effort, a subscription to one of the many magazines that avoid any sharp challenge to the intellect.

The one story in this investigation which stimulated general approval was the mildly humorous account of an adolescent's daydreams, "That's What Happened to Me." In "That's What Happened to Me," the subjects clearly recognize their own experience—the struggle for position and power through athletics, the cliques and factions, and the daydreams of conquest and fame that are familiar to the majority of American adolescents in the schools.

Inasmuch as learning requires interaction between subject matter and the learner, it may be that teachers will find stories like "That's What Happened to Me" the most promising material for stimulating the class discussions and reflection that will truly foster the educational growth of adolescents. However, such stories will not lead to more challenging literature unless some program to continue the learner's growth is carefully planned and carried through.

(7) *Adolescents Do Not Relate Religious Values to Literary Values.* Another observation emerges from an inventory of elements which do *not* enter into the subjects' responses. Formal religious statements are among those missing elements. Although numerous responses may be reflecting the ethical teachings of the various religions represented in this study, only one paper (out of more than 3000 responses to the ten

stories) contains a direct statement about God. This paper represents the reaction of a boy who is neither outstandingly high nor low in his social sensitivity. His response to "The Horse" is produced here as an example of a unique statement:

> It just goes to show how unthankful some people are. Ruth had at least a little sympathy. David cared little whether he hurt someone else's feelings or not, it seemed that he was almost cruel sometimes. Teachers are good at befriending people like that.
>
> The Lord cares little for people like David Conroy. The Lord cares much for the Pure and Simple.

It is possible that the absence of reference to religion may be related to the fact that religion is not ordinarily discussed in school. Pupils may write in terms of the setting in which they are operating.

(8) *Adolescents Favor Stories Within the Range of Their Emotional and Intellectual Maturity.* A final notable feature of the subjects' responses to the stories is best discussed in relation to "Miss Brill," Katherine Mansfield's story of a lonely spinster whose tremulous attempts to reach out toward other people are rudely defeated by ridicule. "Miss Brill" proved to be the most disliked and least understood of the ten stories used in this study. Of all the students in this entire study, only six per cent achieved a genuine understanding of the story, and this six per cent included only two boys as compared to eighteen girls almost all of whom were at the close of their senior year in high school. Literature like "Miss Brill," literature which requires subtle understandings and identifications beyond the maturity and experience of most adolescents will exact great skill on the part of teachers if it is to be used in the curriculum. Furthermore, in selecting literature for values which may help adolescents become more sensitive in their human relations, teachers may often be justified in rejecting materials like "Miss Brill" in favor of materials like "Not Wanted,"[13] an account of a boy's struggle for affection, a story which many adolescents find deeply moving. Although it seems unfortunate that so excellent a story as "Miss Brill" should be rejected, the importance of considering the psychology of adolescents and the need for interaction between learner and subject matter are considerations no thoughtful curriculum committee can long ignore. A more careful attention to the kinds of identification of which junior high school pupils are capable could conceivably increase the chances of successfully using literature as exacting as "Miss Brill" at the senior high school level. Nothing that has been expressed here is intended to convey the idea that all literature should be at the students' level of emotional and intellectual development or that a teacher should never "stretch" his pupils' appreciations.

At the close of the investigation, when all the students had listened to the ten short stories, the teachers passed out a form on which were listed all the important characters of the stories. The students chose the two characters they would help if only two might be chosen. Julius, the Indian boy in "Yours Lovingly" and Jerry, the orphan in "A Mother in Mannville" drew the largest amount of sympathy from an adolescent audience. However, the Jewish family, so unjustly treated in "Prelude," received even more adolescent sympathy if one considers the three characters as a unit. Clearcut cases of injustice such as we find in "Prelude" and "Yours Lovingly" evidently have more power to stir adolescent idealism and sensitivity to human feelings than cases of humiliation and poor adjustment such as we find in "The Beginning of Wisdom," "The New Kid," and "A Start in Life."

From Grade 10 through Grade 12 there is a tendency to feel increasingly less sympathy for the youngest characters in the stories and to transfer that sympathy to older characters. Again, this testifies to the persistent tendency of the subjects in this study to identify with characters who are most like themselves. Other research, notably that of Stewart,[23] has encountered this same tendency. Stewart administered personality tests like the Bernreuter to the adolescents in her study. She also measured her subjects' preferences for various characters like Scarlett as opposed to Melanie in a short summary of *Gone with the Wind*. Adolescents who measured high in dominance and aggressiveness chose Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara in preference to Melanie and Ashley. In a summary of *Wuthering Heights* the most submissive adolescents chose Edgar and Isabella whereas Heathcliff and Catherine were chosen by the dominant adolescents.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS RELATING TO SOCIAL SENSITIVITY

Responses to literature are not the only factors related to social sensitivity. The educator asks a number of other questions.

> Does intelligence have anything to do with social sensitivity? Do more boys than girls show this behavior? Or vice versa? How about socio-economic status? Popularity? Emotional needs? Values and ideals? Are any of these factors related to sympathy?

The data on these matters contain some of the most helpful insights and also some of the most significant statistical differences developed by this study.

1. *Intelligence.* No differences in intelligence were found between the two groups unlike in social sensitivity. The same lack of difference held true when the two sexes were separated and compared (high-sensitive boys versus low-sensitive boys; high-sensitive girls versus low-sensitive girls).
2. *Sex.* The number of girls exceeding the boys in the most sensitive group was significantly greater.[24] In the same way, the number of boys was greater than the number of girls in the low sensitive group. That a relationship exists between social sensitivity and sex seems clearly established in this study.
3. *Socio-economic status.* This proved to be an important factor in influencing the social sensitivity of adolescent boys but not that of adolescent girls. Low socio-economic status is definitely less conducive to sympathetic behavior for adolescent boys than average or good socio-economic conditions. It is probable that boys of low economic status, more directly faced with the problem of economic struggle, find it more necessary than girls to suppress tendencies toward sympathy and to adopt an attitude of every man for himself in a world they perceive as ruthless.[25]
4. *Popularity and group acceptance.* As one might logically expect, the most sensitive adolescents are much more popular among their peers than the least sensitive. Popularity was measured by choices on sociograms.[26]
5. *Emotional needs.* Eight emotional needs of adolescents were measured by a special form of an instrument developed by Dr. Louis Raths and called the SELF-PORTRAIT. He covers the following needs:

   (a) to belong
   (b) to achieve
   (c) to feel secure economically
   (d) to be free from fears
   (e) to have love and affection (especially in the home)
   (f) to be free from feelings of anxiety
   (g) to share in decision making
   (h) to understand the world

The first of these needs—the need to belong—is identical in content with the sociometric measure of group acceptance just discussed in 4 (above). Both measure an individual's acceptance or rejection by his peer group. One important difference, however, exists in technique. On the sociogram, the individual's acceptance is rated by his classmates. On

the *Self-Portrait*, the individual himself estimates his acceptance by others although he may not realize he is doing so. As can be seen in Table 2, the adolescents who are most sensitive feel slightly more aware of group acceptance than do the members of the least sensitive group. However, at the twenty-fifth percentiles, both groups are almost identical, and the total spread of scores is just as wide for both groups. Evidently, the least sensitive subjects are fairly impervious to the rejection they experience from their classmates and are scarcely aware of it. Inasmuch as the integrity of the ego is so deeply wounded by rejection, particularly in adolescence, it is possible that one should say, "The least sensitive adolescents do not consciously permit themselves to be aware of their rejection by their classmates."

In studying Table 2, the reader will want to remember that plus scores represent a satisfaction of a particular need whereas minus scores represent the presence of an emotional need.

Table 2 indicates that the most important emotional need to examine among the eight is the *need to be free from feelings of anxiety*. Not only is this need the one for which there is the greatest difference between the two groups, but it is also one of the three needs for which the median of the most sensitive adolescents is below that of the least sensitive adolescents."

TABLE 2
Eight Important Emotional Needs (Self-Portrait)
Medians for Groups Varying in Sensitivity

	Median		Difference Between the Medians of the Two Groups
	60 High Sensitive Cases	60 Low Sensitive Cases	
Need to Belong	3.00	2.07	.93
Need to Achieve	0.90	−1.17	2.07
Need to Feel Secure Economically	−0.50	+0.94	1.44
Need to be Free from Fears	−0.30	−0.83	.53
Need to Have Love and Affection	+4.50	+3.50	1.00
Need to be Free from Feelings of Anxiety	−4.00	−1.00	3.00
Need to Share in Decision Making	+2.25	+1.33	.92
Need to Understand the World	−3.50	−2.75	.75

The difference in the extent to which the two groups express anxiety about their behavior is one of the most important findings of this study. A development which was not anticipated at the beginning of the investigation, this difference in anxiety persistently reappeared in the course of the investigation. As the investigation proceeded, the problem of anxiety

called attention to itself repeatedly in the various responses of the most sensitive subjects and in the case studies that were done.

Anxiety, in this investigation, is defined as a condition of mental uneasiness arising from fear or distress, especially concerning possible misfortune or some uncertain future event. An examination of individuals who rank high on social sensitivity shows them to be gravely concerned over such items as these from the section of *Self-Portrait* concerned with anxiety:

Some people pick on other people or they are mean to them. I may have done things like that but I forget about it and don't worry about it.	Out of four choices, sensitive adolescents usually check this *"LEAST* like me."
Sometimes I treat people badly and I hurt their feelings. I wish I didn't do these things because I remember it a long time.	Out of four choices, sensitive adolescents usually check this *"MOST* like me."
Sometimes I have been a poor sport and I wish I could forget about it, but I remember it for a long time.	Out of four choices, sensitive adolescents usually check this *"MOST* like me."

It is important to remember that it is out of a set of four choices, three of which concern *other* emotional needs (such as economic security or the need for friends) that the highly sensitive adolescents choose such items.

The adolescents who rank high on sensitivity very frequently have genuine reasons for a pattern of general anxiety. Broken homes, family tension, religious differences in the home, and adolescent tragedies in love are common enough among the very highest cases of sensitivity in this study. However, one cannot be sure whether conflict makes an adolescent more anxious and more sensitive or whether, being sympathetic and anxious, the adolescent is more sensitive to conflict when it touches his life. Thus, we have not been successful in accounting for the difference in our two groups of adolescents on the matter of anxiety over their behavior. Perhaps the child psychologists, in their studies of the formation of personality, will identify patterns for rearing children that will instill in them a reasonable amount of anxiety. Logically, it would seem from our case studies of the extremes of the two groups that neither lax nor harsh discipline facilitates a child's development of social sensitivity.

Davis[18] has pointed out the tremendously vital role of socialized anxiety in shaping the personality of an adolescent in our culture, particularly in the development of the personalities of adolescents of the middle class. "Adolescents with a strongly developed social anxiety, therefore, usually strive for the approved social goals most eagerly and learn most successfully. In this sense, the most fully socialized individuals are those with the most effective, socially directed anxiety." Viewed in this light, the need to be free from anxiety, as worded by the *Self-Portrait* in this research, is confusing. Actually, for an adolescent to be free from some anxieties would mean to be indifferent to the approved goals of his culture, in many cases a highly undesirable attitude. On the other hand, obviously, an adolescent can become too anxious, and there is considerable evidence that the goals and tempo of our culture are fostering an undesirable amount of anxiety. Parents, educators, and other interested agencies need to realize that the adolescent must learn to bear the degree and kind of anxiety which will help him to strive toward reasonable personal and social goals. At the same time, they need all the knowledge they can gather concerning the limits and kinds of anxiety that an adolescent should be expected to bear.

In any event, a study of sympathy will need to take into account the psychology of anxiety. Although too much anxiety can become disabling or can represent selfish maneuvers toward security, a complete or relative lack of anxiety does diminish social sensitivity in human relations.

Other features to be noted in Table 2 are:

a. The high sensitive group has more needs satisfied than do the least sensitive adolescents. In five out of eight emotional needs, the high sensitive group rises above the least sensitive adolescents in the extent to which they mark their needs as satisfied.

b. The high sensitive group more than the least sensitive group feels the need to be economically secure—even though their socio-economic rating proves them to be, as a group, at a higher economic level than the less sensitive subjects. It may be that the amount of home pressure and the influence of standards of success operate more potently in the case of sensitive boys whose families are more favored in economic status. If we expect boys from the lower economic groups to strive, we must convince them of "the reality of the rewards at the end of the anxiety-laden climb."

c. The high sensitive adolescents receive a higher score on their sense of love and affection in the home.

d. The least sensitive subjects show their greatest need to be that of a sense of achievement. Good guidance in the schools might assist them to see that achievement will be conditioned to some degree by good

human relations. Sensitivity to the feelings of others, important as it is to a cohesive society, also has an importance in the individual's search for happiness, success, and the good life.

> Unfair or aggressive behavior and preoccupation with self-regarding interests to the exclusion of due sensitiveness to the reciprocal claims of human intercourse, lead to a form of organization which deprives the person so organized of whole ranges of important values. No mere loss of social pleasures is in question, but a twist or restriction of impulses, whose normal satisfaction is involved in almost all the greatest goods of life. The two senses in which a man may "take advantage" of his fellows can be observed in practice to conflict. Swindling and bullying, whether in business matters or in personal relations, have their cost; which the best judges agree to be excessive. And the greater part of the cost lies *not* in the consequences of being found out, in the loss of social esteem and so forth, but in actual systematic disability to attain important values.[19]

6. *Church and Church Attendance.* Although the subjects belonged to many faiths—Roman Catholic, Russian and Greek Orthodox Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, all forms of Protestant, and various other faiths and sects—no one faith prevails among the most sensitive adolescents.

   Using three categories of church attendance (1. Every Sunday; 2. Some attendance; 3. No attendance), a statistical test failed to show any significant difference in church attendance. If religious experience plays a role in influencing social sensitivity, better ways of evaluating it must be found than those of denomination and attendance. Case studies did show that the quality and intensity of religious experience do have a relation—but whether *cause* of sensitivity or *result* is not certain.
7. *Values and Ideals.* Both boys and girls from the least sensitive group showed strong approval for persons who run their own lives; who are reckless, independent, restless, free and impatient of all control and law; who are ungovernable, superior, and powerful, free from the need of considering how others will react to what they do. This offers a most interesting contrast to the high sensitive adolescents' anxiety over their own behavior on which they are significantly "superior" to their least sensitive peers.
8. *One Hundred Dollars to Spend.* The answers to this simple measure were classified into five categories and tabulated according to that classification. The results are shown in Table 3. In our culture, the emphasis upon money is sufficiently crucial to make its expenditure an important measure of an individual's values. Here, it would seem to indicate that the least sensitive adolescents are also inclined to be the most self-centered.

TABLE 3

If I Had $100 to Spend

Amount of Money Spent for Various Purposes by Groups of Varying Sensitivity

Purpose	*Average Amount of Money Spent*	
	Most Sensitive	Least Sensitive
A. Amount of money spent on self such as clothes, personal interests, etc.	$39.98	$65.00
B. Amount of money spent on self for personal growth such as education	$16.88	$ 3.70
C. Amount of money spent on members of immediate family	$19.16	$ 8.47
D. Amount of money spent on helping others (beyond own family but with self in role of "Generous Superior")	$ 4.79	$13.04
E. Amount of money spent on others—clearly non-selfish	$19.19	$ 9.78

In summarizing this section on factors other than response to literature, it may be said that the most sensitive cases in this study are adolescents who feel an unusual amount of concern over their behavior and their economic security. The least sensitive adolescents do not show a similar anxiety about their behavior toward other people nor are they much worried over economic security. Their needs are more likely to lie in the areas of wanting to achieve more than they do and to share more in making decisions. These least sensitive people are clearly more concerned with money, clothes, and themselves than are the most sensitive cases. Their values, choices, wishes, and expenditure of money all reflect an orientation around self, whereas the most sensitive adolescents are socially oriented to a greater degree. The least sensitive cases reveal, also, much more resistance to the controls our society imposes upon individuals.

It is this matter of values and self-control which links this section (on Personal and Social Factors Relating to Sensitivity) to the teaching of literature. The case for literature as an important part of general education rests upon its power to present values. In literature the reader has extensive opportunities to comprehend the controlling needs, motives, and value-systems of many personalities. Through literature, understanding and sensitivity can be increased, not only of other people but of the reader's own self. The best literature can help to point away from blurred values, wasteful confusion, and muddled living; it can select and order, bringing beauty, personal and social values, emotion and thought into a single ordered realm.

Practical Suggestions for the Schools

Although not a part of the investigation, a number of suggestions for educational practice seem reasonable in light of the study's findings. Offered here as suggestions rather than prescriptions, these practices represent a summary of those implications which arose most persistently in studying the adolescents involved in this report.

Literature

1. The teaching of literature in the secondary schools needs reorientation away from a heavy emphasis on such scholarly concerns as the history of literature and the types of literature. The use of literature for presenting human values deserves to be increased in the classroom. This is a problem of emphasis, not an either-or choice. Attention to structure, style, history, and types has a legitimate place in the study of literature. When properly taught, appreciation of form and history may enable an adolescent to perceive better the total value of a literary selection. However, such matters should never be allowed to dominate the curriculum in literature, particularly at the secondary level. The significance of literature as a record of human experience should receive the primary emphasis. Properly taught for its own sake by qualified, enthusiastic teachers, literature will contribute incidentally but profoundly to social sensitivity, quite independent of the more specific suggestions which follow.

2. During each school year a few units of instruction need to be shaped rather directly toward a concern with the values which underlie social sensitivity. Such units might be called "Feelings Are Facts,"[20] "Understanding Ourselves and Others," or "To Gain in Sympathetic Understanding." Whether or not such resource units are originated by the teacher or are developed by pupil-teacher planning, they should offer many opportunities for students to understand the attitudes and needs of other personalities. This can best be done by aiding the students in building adequate concepts of people's needs. These concepts can then be fortified and extended through the study of literature. The literature included in such units should be selected both for its quality and for its possibilities to enlarge the students' sympathies. In this research, the literature chosen emphasized situations of trouble and suffering. Such an emphasis was useful in discriminating between sensitive and insensitive adolescents. However, in classroom teaching, stories offering opportunities to sympathize with happiness and pleasure should also be used. During the unit actual experiences in doing something thoughtful for someone also might be included without becoming the occasion for unpleasant moralizing.

There is, of course, no imperative reason why such units be assigned to the English or language arts teacher in a school. In many schools they may more properly belong to the general or unified studies curriculum or to the social studies. Their exact placement is related to the total strategy of curriculum planning in any given school system. However, inasmuch as literature and language are so prominently used in units of this kind, the teacher of English will not have an attitude of complete unconcern toward them.

Classroom Procedures

3. Teachers of literature need to develop techniques of classroom discussion which emphasize that reading for understanding and significance is different from reading merely for "what happened in the story." Students often need direct help in learning to distill the implications of an experience, whether in life or in literature. In the study reported here, for instance, mere exposure to ten stories did not bring about any apparent change in the least sensitive group.

From many possible methods of extending students' awareness of the implications of a literary selection, several examples may be useful. During a class period a teacher might read aloud some short story with a human relations theme, asking the students to write down their responses as soon as the reading is concluded. Before the next class period, the teacher should analyze these student responses quite carefully, searching especially for (1) the papers which are in disagreement and (2) the papers which probe beneath the events of the story, noting why the people acted as they did or what the author is trying to communicate. On the second day, the teacher should lead a class discussion which is heightened by the excerpts the teacher reads from various papers. Although the teacher does not necessarily mention the names of the students whose responses are quoted, those individuals will more likely feel impelled to enter the discussion. Thus, the second day should serve as a good model for the subsequent days when groups of students in the class repeat the teacher's performance. The student groups choose a suitable story, select a member of the group to read the story, collect and analyze their fellow students' papers, and act as a panel for leading the discussion of the story their group has presented. The teacher's role, after presenting the technique, is one of directing emphasis toward discussion of the stories' themes and implications (rather than mere action and incident). To do this properly, the teacher will need to analyze each story in the manner exemplified by the judges' analysis of "Yours Lovingly." (See Table 1 on page 19.)

The use of stimulus stories is another method of deepening students' awareness of the more subtle aspects of literature. Here the teacher reads a story up to its climax and stops. The students then discuss or write suitable endings, suitable in terms of what has happened, what the characters' motives are, and what the writer's intention appears to be. Sometimes students use socio-drama to act out their various suggestions for story endings. This classroom discussion of the various solutions to a story can be highly educative. Teachers who are interested in helping pupils gain insight and social sensitivity recommend these procedures quite enthusiastically.[21]

4. With adolescents, literature used to increase social sensitivity must frequently include characters close to their own age and of their own sex if identification is to operate in its most effective form. Furthermore, students will often have to begin with identifications that are easy and pleasant, as they do when they read *Little Women* or *Tom Sawyer*. The next goal will be to help them see that the real effort to be made is that of understanding less lovable or less glamorous personalities. Martha in "The Horse" and Marty in "The New Kid" become the more crucial tests of an adolescent's social insight. Teachers who know literature for adolescents and give careful attention to guiding individual reading can do much to help their students.

5. Inasmuch as identification and imitation are two of the most relevant features in education for social sensitivity, all forms of dramatization become important in the education of sensitivity. Role playing and socio-drama deserve further attention and study in education. The informal method of acting out brief segments of a story and then discussing the actors' interpretations needs to be extended in its use. A more systematic and purposeful use of high school dramatics is another possibility. Audio-visual materials chosen according to educational purpose can be effective.

6. Teachers who have centered some instruction on problems of human relations report that preparation for reading a story or seeing a movie is of the utmost importance. For instance, before reading a story about a boy or girl who is adjusting to a new situation, students should tell about situations which were new to them and how they felt. (Many students have had the experience of entering a new school). This may be accomplished by written composition or by a class discussion during which someone records significant generalizations on the blackboard. After such preparation, stories like "The New Kid" or "The Recruit"[22] evoke a more accurate and sympathetic response from the class. Similarly, before reading "The Horse" or "That's What Happened to Me," students

should reflect on how it feels to be left out of some activity. In this case, discussion may not always be wise; the wounds of rejection are often too personal for oral discussion. However, written composition, a brief lecture by the teacher, or several pointed questions for silent reflection can be substituted for discussion.

By preliminary comments upon the psychological reasons for condemnation, skillful teachers may forestall the tendency of adolescents low in sensitivity to condemn characters in stories.

7. Some teachers have tried out a variation of projective techniques. Pictures which might evoke the sympathies of adolescents are clipped from magazines and all explanations of the pictures are cut away. These pictures are viewed and discussed by students, the teacher relying as much as possible upon student comment for the education of those class members who are least astute in interpreting human feelings. Pictures used for this purpose should begin with obvious problems and lead toward more complex evocations of social sensitivity. Pictures of young people in situations of happiness or sorrow, triumph or trouble, are particularly useful. Some pictures ambiguous in import are useful because they elicit the best discussion.

8. Of all the concepts with which the teacher deals in developing social sensitivity, perhaps the most important is the concept that all behavior has causes, causes that are not always apparent on the surface. This concept needs reiteration throughout a series of planned experiences. For instance, a teacher might begin with several simple and obvious anecdotes which he has prepared. These could be followed, in ascending order of difficulty, with short stories like "I Gotta Name"[23] (a story in which a boy learns to understand his younger brother's behavior), and "A Mother in Mannville." After the two stories have been discussed, two films would be particularly useful. "Right or Wrong"[24] offers an opportunity to analyze the behavior of six people who are involved in an incident of juvenile vandalism, and "The Quiet One"[25] provides a searching study of the behavior of a child whose need for affection and security is thwarted. Later, the insights developed during such a study should be applied to some novel like *Call It Courage, The Yearling,* or *Cry the Beloved Country.* The danger of promoting a superficial kind of "psychologizing" is present in this kind of teaching, but dangers of some kind attend almost all significant education. The only escape from them is a curriculum so safe that it is likewise innocuous.

Total Curriculum

9. Certainly, in teaching patterns of sympathetic behavior, using various kinds of experience, is important. Emphasis upon the concept that

all behavior is caused and, in class discussion, going beyond the mere facts of a story are promising steps toward increasing social sensitivity. In addition to each of these approaches, however, teachers need to keep in mind the relationship between sympathy and social environment: classrooms and total school setting as free from enervating tensions as possible, attention to the mental and physical health of students, and careful consideration of the peer group relations in a school. The school must be a place of reasonable security for a child or adolescent. Bigotry, intolerance, and callousness in human relations thrive best when people feel insecure. Teachers must themselves try to be warm, friendly, relaxed people. In all their relations with students they must deal with them as any cultured adult deals with another adult. This means that teachers keep appointments with students promptly, avoid humiliating them before others, and maintain a pleasant manner. It means that teachers avoid the imperious command and the harsh tone of voice that still characterize some teachers in their classroom behavior. Particularly important is the teacher's skill in accepting and weaving into class discussion every contribution from individual students, even when the student's offering is not particularly apt. Nothing discourages growth toward a good classroom atmosphere so much as the student's fear that his recitation will be disparaged or discounted.

10. At times the entire curriculum must include some emphasis on the need for human understanding. This means that assemblies, pageants, class plays, yearbooks and annuals, clubs and student council activities, as well as units of instruction must be focused more directly toward teaching better human relations. Students can be involved in projects such as toys for crippled children, letters to people in other countries, and organized plans to welcome new students to our school. Old-fashioned and naive as some of these may seem, they must be turned to advantage.

11. Teachers should sometimes bring into their classes people from the community, people who represent types of personality adolescents admire and who have, in addition, the traits of humane behavior and understanding hearts. The athletic director or coach in the school is particularly important as a model to boys. The coach who is a mature, wise human being with a deep understanding of other human beings and a sensitivity to their feelings can be a major factor in the curriculum when that curriculum is centered on human relations.

12. Teachers of science, social studies, English, and core curricula can watch for opportunities to correct sloppy thinking about other people. They must make their students skeptical of all stereotypes which involve

human beings. They can also do something positive. They can arm the students with facts and information to show the ways in which all mankind are alike. They can emphasize the similarities rather than the differences which characterize all human beings. They can play down the curious customs of the "heathen foreigner," and they can show hope and needs and spirit of the other people in their basic, universal, human aspects.

Evaluation

13. Tests and standards of accomplishment must also include the goal of social insight. Far better it is to have a simple, homemade instrument of evaluation that tells in a crude way whether or not students are gaining in sympathy and social insight than to have a standardized test of high statistical reliability that measures only narrow outcomes of education. The kind of evaluation carried out in a school deeply influences curriculum, teaching methods and emphasis, and pupil learning.

The Heart of the Problem

Inasmuch as sympathy is influenced by the total culture, it seems clear that literature alone will not develop social sensitivity in every adolescent. Assembly speakers who command adolescent admiration, school pageants, movies, scientific information about race and religions, classroom atmospheres free from tensions, teachers with warmth of personality and genuine social sensitivity, units of study organized around human relations themes, and a total curriculum in which adolescents are aided in understanding one another's needs and in responding to them appropriately—all these and more will be needed to provide experience and background for the imaginative catalyst that we call literature. The educational problem is at heart the problem of helping adolescents select from their culture all good, constructive values and all striving toward wholeness and of helping them to subdue or convert those tendencies that are destructive, negative, wasteful or smugly contented.

1. Usually, but not always, the object of sympathy is another human being. Children feel sympathy for toys, dolls, and other inanimate objects, and both adults and children feel sympathy for animals. However, the range of sympathy does not extend often or far beyond the human race.

2. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, *Cross Creek* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York: 1942) pp. 57-61.

3. For a review of these three studies, see George D. Stoddard, "The Educability of Emotional Behavior" in *The Educational Record*, April, 1938, pp. 164-167.

4. Van Wyck Brooks, *Opinions of Oliver Allston* (E. P. Dutton Co., New York: 1941) p. 304.

5. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, "A Mother in Mannville" from *When the Whippoorwill* (New York: Scribners).

6. Eugenie Courtright, "Yours Lovingly" in Cook, Luella B., *et al. Adventures in Appreciation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947).

7. Ruth Suckow, "A Start in Life" from *Iowa Interiors* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1926).

8. Marian Hurd McNeely, "The Horse" from *The Way to Glory and Other Stories* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.).

9. Murray Heyert, "The New Kid," *Harper's Magazine,* June, 1944.

10. Michael Fessier, "That's What Happened to Me" from *Story Magazine,* November, 1935, p. 54, Story Magazine, Inc., 116 East 30th Street, New York 16, New York.

11. Albert Halper, "Prelude" in *Here We Are* (New York: McBride, 1941).

12. Jesse Lynch Williams, in *Challenge to Understand,* Cook, Luella B. *et al.* pp. 285-305. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1942).

13. Naomi S. Stewart, *Attitudes Toward Literary Characters as Related to Factors in Personality,* Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Purdue University, June, 1944.

14. *Significant* is used here in the strict statistical sense. Those who wish to examine the results of T-tests and Chi-square techniques with their levels of confidence will find them in the complete report of the study, *Adolescents of Varying Sensitivity and Their Responses to Literature Intended to Evoke Sympathy,* unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, June, 1949.

15. The statistical measure known as the T-Test shows this difference between boys of high sensitivity and boys of low sensitivity to be significant at the one per cent level of confidence.

16. The differences between the two groups or between either of the sexes of the two groups are significant at the one per cent level as measured by the T-Test.

17. The other two are (c) need to feel economically secure and (h) need to understand the world.

18. Allison Davis, "Socialization and Adolescent Personality," Chapter XI, *Adolescence,* Forty-Third Yearbook, Part I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), pp. 198-216.

19. I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1924), pp. 53-54.

20. Heaton, Margaret M., *Feelings Are Facts,* a Monograph on Human Relations for Teachers, San Francisco Public Schools, San Francisco, California.

21. Taba, Hilda, and Elkins, Deborah, *With Focus on Human Relations,* American Council on Education, Washington, D. C., 1950. A superb report on classroom practices at the junior high level. The principles evolved are capable of extension to all levels and areas of education.

22. Michael Wilson, "The Recruit" from *Challenge to Understand,* Cook, Luella B. *et al.,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1942), pp. 461-6.

23. Zachary Gold, "I Gotta Name" from *People in Literature,* Cook, Luella B. *et al.,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1948), pp. 3-11.

24. Coronet Films, Coronet Magazine, Chicago, Illinois.

25. Athena Films, Inc., 164 West 46th Street, New York City 19, New York. In California this film is available from the State Health Department, Bureau of Education, 760 Market Street, San Francisco, California, at no charge to the schools.